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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
08/623,852	03/26/1996	ROBERT A. HARD	623852	3830

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[REDACTED] ART UNIT [REDACTED] PAPER NUMBER

1754

DATE MAILED: 02/24/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 08/623,852	Applicant(s) Hard et al	
	Examiner Steven Bos	Art Unit 1754	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136 (a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on Sep 23, 2002

2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

4) Claim(s) 1-17 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above, claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) 14-17 is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-13 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claims _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

11) The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) approved b) disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.

12) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

13) Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) All b) Some* c) None of:

1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

*See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

14) Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).

a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

15) Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s). _____

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: _____

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The request filed on September 23, 2002 for a Continued Prosecution Application (CPA) under 37 CFR 1.53(d) based on parent Application No. 08/623852 is acceptable and a CPA has been established. An action on the CPA follows.

The title of the invention is not descriptive. A new title is required that is clearly indicative of the invention to which the claims are directed.

Claim 1 is objected to because of the following informalities: In claim 1, line 11, it is suggested to insert --a temperature of-- after "attain". Appropriate correction is required.

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 1-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

In claim 1, "a reducing agent to render a metal value insoluble in the digestion mixture" is new matter.

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In claim 1, "for a period of time ... render the one or more additional metal values insoluble in the digestion mixture" is new matter.

Applicant points to instant pg. 3, line 29 to pg. 4, line 2 for support however this requires fluoride ion to be present and then only to render uranium insoluble, however the instant claim 1 does not comprise fluoride nor even uranium.

Claims 1-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, because the specification, while being enabling for tantalum, niobium and uranium metal values, does not reasonably provide enablement for any metal and one or more additional metal values. The specification does not enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention commensurate in scope with these claims.

Claims 1-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, because the specification, while being enabling for the digestion solution comprising fluoride ion, does not reasonably provide enablement for the digestion solution which does not comprise fluoride ion. The specification does not enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention commensurate in scope with these claims. The instant specification pp. 3-4 requires fluoride ion to be present in order to insolubilize uranium metal.

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The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bender '490 taken with Pazdej '777.

Bender teaches the process of solubilizing metals from metal containing material by contacting with sulfuric acid containing a reducing agent and a carbon source (see claims 1,29,36 and the examples).

Bender differs in that the sulfuric acid containing hydrofluoric acid is not stated.

Pazdej teaches the use of sulfuric acid and hydrofluoric acid to solubilize metals (see the figures and claims).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use sulfuric acid containing hydrofluoric acid to dissolve metals in the process of Bender because that is what is taught by Pazdej as desirable.

The subject matter as a whole would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to select the portion of the prior art's range which is within the range of applicant's claims because it has been held to be obvious to select a value in a known range by optimization for the best results, see *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233.

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The subject matter as a whole would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have selected the overlapping portion of the range disclosed by the reference because overlapping ranges have been held to be a *prima facie* case of obviousness, *In re Malagari*, 182 USPQ 549.

Claims 14-17 appear allowable over the cited prior art of record none of which teaches or suggests the instantly claimed combination of process steps.

Applicant's arguments filed March 8, 1999 and May 20, 1999 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant states that Bender does not utilize a reducing agent and a carbon source which differs from the reducing agent.

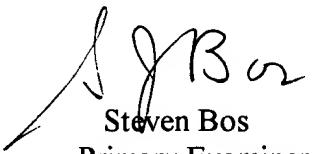
However the instant claims do not require that the reducing agent and the carbon source be different materials. In other words the reducing agent and the carbon source may be one and the same. Also, claim 36 of Bender teaches the use of a mixture of reductants, ie. reducing agents, which includes carbonaceous materials, ie. a carbon source, and another reducing agent, eg. sulfide materials.

In response to applicant's arguments against the references individually, one cannot show nonobviousness by attacking references individually where the rejections are based on

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combinations of references. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981); *In re Merck & Co.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Steven Bos whose telephone number is (703) 308-2537. The examiner is on the increased flexitime program schedule and can normally be reached between 8AM and 6PM Monday through Friday. The FAX No. for After Final amendments is 703-872-9311; for all others it is 703-872-9310. Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.



Steven Bos
Primary Examiner
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